

BIG IDEA

Middle schoolers need to love people sincerely and honor God in all their relationships.



KEY SCRIPTURES

- *Love for others is the second greatest commandment* (Matt. 22:36-40).
- *Loving others means being devoted to them and putting them before ourselves* (Rom. 12:10).
- *Our closest relationships need to be with people of same-hearted devotion to Christ* (2 Cor. 6:14-18).
- *We need godly relationships* (Ecc. 4:9-12).



KEY QUESTIONS YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER IS ASKING

- Why are relationships sometimes so difficult?
- Why won't he/she like me?
- Why do my parents not get along?



AT THIS AGE MOST MIDDLE SCHOOLERS WILL ...

- Struggle with peer pressure and social skills in friendships and relationships with the opposite sex.
- Ask broad, unanswerable questions about life including complex moral and ethical questions.
- Want to explore spiritual matters and relationships with others.



DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

- Many middle schoolers will begin to view moral issues in shades of gray rather than only in black and white. They tend to be unprepared to cope with the issues and need the guidance of parents and other adults.
- Middle schoolers can be moody, restless, and display inconsistent behavior. They are often self-conscious and sensitive to criticism which may impact their relationships with others.
- This can be a tumultuous time in their relationships with their parents. While they begin middle school still seeing parents as heroes and fully accepting their authority, that can change as they get older. In their eyes, parents can be seen as stifling who they are and denying them the freedom they feel entitled to.



COACHING TIPS

- If you haven't already, now is the time to discuss dating standards with your middle schooler. You may still be a few years away from allowing him to date, but set the standards now, so that he knows them ahead of time.
- Discuss Romans 12:10 with your middle schooler about what it means to honor people. Point out that regardless of whether someone is deserving of our honor, we are commanded to show honor to others in our actions and speech (1 Tim. 4:12). In fact, Paul says we are to literally "outdo one another in showing honor."
- Middle schoolers have a tendency to be self-absorbed. Everything centers around them. Find creative ways to focus their attention on others. Do service projects together as a family and encourage her to be involved in ministry opportunities through your church's student ministry.
- Remember that you are your middle schooler's model for how to relate to others. He is watching how you relate to your spouse, to his siblings, and to people in the neighborhood and at church. He's noticing how you honor and respect others, especially those who are different than you. Be sure to present a Christlike example.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HONOR SOMEONE?** Honoring someone may be foreign to your middle schooler. This question may give you the opportunity to explain and define the word. And point out how they can better honor those around them.
- **ARE THERE PEOPLE YOU DON'T GET ALONG WITH?** This may give you insight into conflict your middle schooler is facing and provide you the opportunity to help her work through it from a biblical perspective.
- **WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MARRIAGE?** Your middle schooler won't feel pressured by this question, so you can have some fun with it. Talk about characteristics your middle schooler would want in a spouse.



SAY OR PRAY

- Pray that your middle schooler would show grace, respect, and honor in all his relationships.
- Pray specifically for each of your middle schooler's friends. Pray for their salvation, their spiritual growth, and that they would be godly influences in your middle schooler's life.
- Encourage your middle schooler to let you know when she is concerned for a friend and how you can pray for him/her.